

FAIRS Report

English Composition 112(3300): 701, 702, 703

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Student Learning Outcome: Locate and use appropriate electronic and print sources for research.

Introduction

During the Spring 2013 semester we reinforced the information literacy skills taught in the library information literacy workshops by creating a research journal blog assignment using Google Blogger. Students in all three sections completed blog posts that walked through the research process in support of their proposal research papers. After the conclusion of the paper the students were asked to complete a survey that would generate data about the usefulness of the assignment, their overall experience with the research process, and areas where the assignment could be improved.

The Assignment

We decided to use Blogger for the research journal because Maureen was familiar with the application and students already had existing Google accounts through their university accounts. We modeled our blog settings and privacy settings after speaking with Betty Rogge who also uses Blogger with her students to respond to case studies in an education course.

The assignment consisted of 10 blog posts that required students to respond by a specified deadline for each post. The deadlines were spaced over four weeks as they completed the research for their proposal papers.

The Blog Posts

1. Welcome to the Midterm Blog! These blogging assignments will reinforce the skills learned in the information literacy workshops and help you apply those skills to Paper II. Check your syllabus for deadlines for posting responses to blog posts. After you post responses, come back to the blog to review your classmates' posts and any feedback offered by your instructor or the library staff. If you have any technical issues accessing blog posts, please contact Maureen: mleerch@uakron.edu. To get started, please post a comment below to confirm that you were able to access the blog and read this post. Your posted comments for this blog post are due on Friday, February 22, 2013.
2. Propose a solution to a problem in education or the use of social media. Post your initial ideas as a comment to this blog post. The deadline for posting your comments is Wednesday, February 27, 2013.

3. Commit to a specific topic for your proposal: 1) What is your proposal? 2) Identify the main key terms (main topic and any sub-topics) from your proposal. Your posted comments are due on Wednesday, March 6, 2013.
4. Keeping your proposal topic in mind, which library databases do you think you will search and why? Please list more than one database. Your posted comments are due on Friday, March 8, 2013.
5. Develop a Boolean search strategy using key terms from your proposed topic. (Refer back to your response to blog #3 if necessary). Your search strategy must include at least two (2) different Boolean operators and at least one truncated term (use the asterisk *). Your posted comments are due on Monday, March 11, 2013.
6. Perform the search strategy you listed in Blog #5 in one of the databases your listed in Blog #4. Reflect on your results. (Too many results? Too few results? Not the right kind of information? No scholarly results?) Your posted comments are due on Wednesday, March 13, 2013.
7. After looking through your search results, refine your search strategy and answer at least one of the following questions: 1) Which additional library database would you consider searching? 2) How would you update your search strategy? List your new search strategy by changing or adding key terms, changing operators, or updating truncated terms. Your posted comments are due on Friday, March 15, 2013.
8. Examine your search results. Choose one item that appeared in your search results that you do not plan to use. 1) Provide a citation to the item you do NOT plan to use for your paper. 2) Why did you want to pass on this resource? Your posted comments are due on Monday, March 18, 2013.
9. Examine your search results. Choose one item that appeared in your search results that you DO plan to use. 1) Provide a citation to the item you DO plan to use for your paper. 2) Why did you think this is a good resource to use? Your posted comments are due on Wednesday, March 20, 2013.
10. Reflect on the process of using this blog to journal your research process for Paper II. Your posted comments are due on Friday, March 22, 2013.

The Results

Overall the students had a favorable response to the blog assignment. The results from the Likert Scale questions indicate between an 86% and 94% favorable rating. Questions receiving more negative ratings dealt with the amount and quality of feedback received and technical difficulties. The short answer questions confirmed these issues.

Recommendations

Considering the feedback from the survey we conclude that the research journal blog assignment was a valuable tool and should be repeated. The following should be considered when the assignment is used again in future classes:

1. Improve the questions to clarify expectations and to eliminate any duplication.

2. Improve the pacing and deadlines of the questions to allow reasonable time between posts for feedback from the instructor, librarian, and fellow students.
3. Try using Blogger one more time to see if the technical difficulties can be addressed. Or consider using Springboard discussions as an alternative.

English 112 Research Blog Survey

Total Respondents: 49

Please rate the following statements and circle your level of agreement:

I feel that the library information workshops prepared me for the research blog assignments.

Strongly Agree 18

Agree 28

Disagree 3

Strongly Disagree

I feel that the research blog assignments helped me develop my search strategies for the proposal paper.

Strongly Agree 22

Agree 24

Disagree 3

Strongly Disagree

I feel that the pace and deadlines of the research blog assignments were appropriate.

Strongly Agree 18

Agree 27

Disagree 4

Strongly Disagree

I feel that the points awarded for each blog response was appropriate (not too many points, not too few).

Strongly Agree 21

Agree 24

Disagree 4

Strongly Disagree

I received the appropriate amount of feedback on my blog posts.

Strongly Agree 9

Agree 35

Disagree 4

Strongly Disagree 1

The feedback I received was valuable to my research process.

Strongly Agree 16

Agree 26

Disagree 6

Strongly Disagree 1

Blogger was easy to access and use.

Strongly Agree 30

Agree 15

Disagree 3

Strongly Disagree 1

I did not experience any technical difficulties using the blog.

Strongly Agree 21

Agree 23

Disagree 5

Strongly Disagree

Please elaborate on or clarify the ratings above:

- Everything was satisfactory.
- The Blog was helpful.

- Sometimes when logging in to Blogger it wouldn't work. It would redirect me to Akron's log in website. Then, I would have to go back to Blogger. However, it was easy to use once accessed.
- They were gnarly.
- It was easy and simple to use.
- It was good.
- Blogger was hard to access.
- The research blog assignments were easy and simple and helped me with my proposal paper.
- I thought overall that they were helpful and easy to use.
- I thought the library workshops were great and were very informative.
- All ratings are accurate.
- I didn't receive any feedback on my posts so I assumed I was doing everything right.
- I really loved using Blogger because it was very easy to use and helped me a lot.
- The blog was somewhat helpful but since people were doing different topics it was hard to find what they were saying to be useful.
- Could have been spaced out a bit more on the last few. I didn't receive any feedback other than in class.
- Everything about the blog was appropriate to help me with my research.
- Deadlines were too close together, almost never received feedback on my blogs, I don't feel like it really helped my research, and the entire thing was taken too seriously. For this to work it should be more of a light hearted exercise.
- For the last question, it wouldn't let me write on the last couple of blogs once. But then it was fixed next time I tried.
- Very good.
- It was a fun project. I wish we could have more projects like this in the future.
- I strongly agree to most questions because the library workshop was very helpful. Information that I wasn't sure how to look, I learned how to look them up in the various ways.
- The blog was very helpful to me. It was easy to access, appropriately timed and points awarded were fair.
- I felt that the workshops helped me overall.
- The labs were very boring, however they were helpful. I personally never had technical problems but friends in class did.
- Good overall.
- I thought the blog was great. It was very helpful, and I had no problems with it.
- I felt the Blogger was a useful tool that helped me refine my research strategies and keep on pace with writing my paper.
- The blogs helped greatly in the research process.
- I thought the blogs were a great idea. It helped me when I was confused to see what my classmates were doing.
- Workshops were helpful for research but less helpful when doing the blogs.

- I very rarely received feedback, however when I did it was very helpful and helped get me out of a rut.
- One time my blog post showed up on my computer, but not on Deborah's.
- Some of the blogs were repetitive to work I had already done and would have been useful if done earlier.
- My computer would not load but it would on other computers. Some of the deadlines could have been closer together.
- The blog was easy to use and access. I had no problems at all while using the blog.
- Thought it helped and was easy.
- I was much more prepared to do my papers because of the workshop.
- I thought that some of it was a bit repetitive, but it was helpful step-by-step.

What is the most valuable lesson you took from doing the blog?

- Researching is easier when you know how to research effectively.
- I learned how to use an effective process to go through.
- Honestly, nothing.
- That I can organize how I should start off my research papers from now on.
- How to make the best of what search engines I have available.
- Discussing your topic with others helps formulate and improves it.
- How to blog.
- How to use limiters (and/or/not) to find good sources.
- You must stay organized while doing a research paper.
- The organizing throughout all the blogs.
- Time management. I had to make time to do it every day.
- Obtaining easy points.
- The most valuable lesson I took from these blogs were looking at what other students were doing to improve their papers.
- The most valuable lesson I learned from doing the blog was the time management needed for evaluating sources.
- The importance of doing things in small steps.
- It let me understand the correct way of thinking for my paper. The process lead me into my paper easier.
- I learned more on how to develop search strategies.
- Proper way to search.
- Being responsible for knowing when they are due.
- I learned how to modify my key terms to help my research and which databases to use.
- Research strategies.
- Creating search strategies.
- Developing certain search strategies and learning how to cite better.
- Entering search strategies.

- How to discern valuable sources from nonvaluable.
- How to research for certain things on the web and then apply it.
- It was a good exercise to learn how to space out my time.
- It really helped me to think about my paper and what I wanted to write about.
- Learning to express my opinion.
- That working with the library workshop tips along with my class helped my proposal paper.
- Learning the different research tools helped.
- That there is something called Google Blogger.
- A great way to find your search strategy for articles that are scholarly.
- I learned how to find a good source and that other students with similar topic may have helpful sources as well.
- To be prepared.
- Probably the fact that it kept me organized and up to speed with my paper. It helped me not to procrastinate.
- I learned that it is important to stay on track and not get behind with the writing assignments we have. The blogs kept us on schedule.
- Pacing was a valuable lesson. This blog kept me on track with my paper and research.
- The most valuable lesson I took was the ability to use Boolean search strategies.
- To keep on track and not fall behind.
- Finishing for deadline.
- How to use the resources the library has in an organized manner.
- Definitely developing a search strategy.
- I learned a lot about how Blogger works and the importance of good sources.
- Research strategy, blog helped find sources.
- The blog taught me how to manage my time.
- Look deeper into my paper and searches for sources
- Diversify the databases you use. It leads to finding a lot more information.
- Some research techniques

Do you think the blog was useful to improving the skills required to finish English Comp. 112 successfully?

- Yes this helped a lot during the research process.
- Yes, very helpful.
- I liked the blog for the most part but it really didn't help me at all. It just felt like one more deadline to worry about.
- Yes, because now I know how to start with paper 3.
- Yes, it makes doing the research much easier and helps me narrow down the results.
- Yes
- No
- Yes, it was very useful.

- Yes, if I used blog again, it would make me be more organized.
- Yes
- Yes, I thought it was useful.
- Not really, because a lot of the info wasn't needed.
- Yes because I do not think I would have used the search strategies that were recommended.
- I do think the blog was useful to improving the skills required to complete this course.
- Yes
- No, I thought the blogs were pretty simple and would figure out easily. We already knew this.
- Yes, especially with my proposal paper.
- Yes
- Yes, very helpful.
- Yes
- Yes
- No
- Yes, very useful.
- Not entirely
- Yes
- It does help with my research for our last paper.
- Yes, I learned many new search strategies.
- It helped the workshop items stick. Making sure we used the skills.
- I'm not quite sure right now, because this was my first time using the blog.
- Yes, it was.
- Yes
- No, it was lame.
- Yes
- Yes
- Yes, it taught me to research carefully.
- Yes, it made me apply what I learned in the workshops so that I was confident in those skills for other papers.
- Yes, the blogs were useful in determining which sources were good to use and how to evaluate them.
- Yes, it elaborated on the lessons used in the library workshops.
- I believe that the blogs were very helpful to finishing English comp 112.
- I believe it was. The blogs incorporated the lessons we learned in the library workshops and these skills are helping me with my papers.
- Kind of useful somewhat not
- Yes
- Yes
- The blog was mainly very useful; however some parts seemed unnecessary and repetitive.
- Yes it was.

- The blog helped me use the skills I learned in the workshops. These skills helped me find good sources and I am still using these sources now.
- Yes, made me do the process.
- Yes, this class requires a lot of research and the workshops taught me a lot I did not already know about research strategies.
- It was kind of a nice assignment to gain points and discuss techniques for finding information.